

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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O R 021652Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6691

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 11860

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EG , IS

SUBJ: FAHMY ON MARINER INCIDENT

REF: (A) CAIRO 11704, (B) TEL AVIV 6000

SUMMARY: FAHMY IS IRATE ABOUT MARINER INCIDENT. HE CHARGES AMOCO FAILED COMPLY WITH SPECIFIC GOE INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP THE RIG ON LOCAION. ECHOING HILAL'S CLAIM TO AMOCO, HE CHARGED USG HAD PRESSED AMOCO TO WITHDRAW. I DENIED THIS AND GAVE HIM FACTS OF SITUATION, INCLUDING MY TLECON WITH HILAL OF TWO NIGHTS AGO. RECALLING DEMARCHE I HAD MADE TO HIM TWO EVENINGS AGO, I ALSO TOLD HIM OF PARALLEL DEMARCH MADE BY TOON TO GOE AND OF ISRAELI RESPONSE. AMOCO AND ISRAELI VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED ARE CONTRADICTORY AND I WAS SEEKING FULL DEBRIEFING OF RIG FOREMAN. CALLING ISRAELI VERSION A FABRICATION, FAHMY STATED ISRAELI ACTION IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO GOE. GOE DOES NOT ACCEPT MEDIAN LINE. MARINER FORMAN'S PRECIPITIOUS DEPARTURE HAD PLAYED INTO ISRAELI HANDS. HE WOULD GIVE HILAL INSTRUCTIONS SEND AMOCO RIG OUT AGAIN WITHOUT DELAY, WITH ESCORTING EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS, TO REDRESS DAMAGE. ANY REFUSAL OF AMOCO TO COMPLY WILL FORCE GOE TO RECONSIDER CONCESSION. I TOLD FAHMY AMOCO IS FULFILLING ITS CONCESSION OBLIGATIONS. ALSO RELATED MY PERTINENT TALK WITHGAMASY IN WHICH LATTER HAD SAID MARINER SHOULD FOR THE MOMENT WORK WEST OF CONCEPTUAL

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MEDIAN LINE, BUT GO BACK TO 304.1 AFTER RAMADHAN. FAHMY

OBJECTED THAT ANY SUCH DELAY WILL HARDEN PRECEDENT WHICH ISRAELIS ARE TRYING TO SET. IN TELECON WITH HILAL, HE INSTRUCTED MINPET ORDER AMOCO SEND RIG OUT AGAIN. HILAL OBJECTED AND QUOTED GAMASY'S POSITION. FAHMY SAID HE WOULD TALK TO GAMASY. RECALLING OUR VIEW THAT AMOCO WAS WITHIN ITS LEGAL RIGHTS OPERATING AT 304.1, FAHMY SAID HE EXPECTS OUR SUPPORT FOR GOE POSITION. WE SHOULD NOT TRY TO STOP AMOCO FROM SENDING RIG BACK. I TOLD HIM WE ARE NOT QUESTIONING AMOCO'S LEGAL RIGHT TO BE THERE, BUT OBJECT TO AMERICAN PROPERTY OR PERSONS BEING MADE PAWNS IN THIS KIND OF CONFRONTATION. FAHMY INSISTED ISRAELIS ARE BLUFFING AND THEIR GAME SHOULD BE CALLED. THEY HAVE THEMSELVES SAID THEY HAD NO INTENTION PROVOKE CONFRONTATION. END SUMMARY.

1. HAD DISCUSSION WITH FAHMY TODAY ABOUT MARINER INCIDENT. PREDICTABLY, HE WAS GREATLY EXERCISED. HE BLASTED AMOCO FOR ALLOWING MARINER FOREMAN TO LEAVE 304.1 SITE AGAINST WHAT HE CALLED SPECIFIC GOE ORDERS. HE CLAIMED HE, PERSONALLY, HAD INSTRUCTED MINPET HILAL TO ISSUE THOSE ORDERS. HILAL HAD TOLD HIM THAT I HAD GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO AMOCO TO WITHDRAW THE RIG. (WILL BE NOTED THAT HILAL APPARENTLY MADE SAME POINT TO ROSS CRAIG OF AMOCO--CAIRO 11779.)

2. I TOLD FAHMY THAT THIS WAS NOT SO. I HAVE NOT AUTHORITY TO INSTRUCT AMOCO TO DO ANYTHING. MY TALK WITH HILAL ON TUESDAY EVENING WAS IN RESPONSE TO CRAIG'S CONCERN ABOUT MINPET'S INSTRUCTIONS THAT AMERICANS NOT LEAVE THE RIG. GIVEN THE FACT THAT AN ARMED CONFRONTATION SEEMED POSSIBLE BETWEEN ISRAELI GUNBOATS ON STATION AND EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS EN ROUTE TO THE SITE, IT WAS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT AMERICANS TO REMAIN AND BE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF POTENTIAL HOSTILITIES. I HAD URGED HILAL TO AGREE THAT THEY MIGHT LEAVE THE RIG (CAIRO 11702). HILAL HAD TOLD ME THE GOE POSITION. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE FOREMAN OF THE RIG HAD DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY TO MOVE THE RIG OR TO MOVE OUT HIS PEOPLE IF HE THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO DO SO. IN FACE OF WHAT RIG FOREMAN REGARDED AS A SECOND ISRAELI ULTIMATUM, AND PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF AGITATION OF HIS AMERICAN AND

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EGYPTIAN CREW, HE HAD MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE THE AREA. THE FORMAN WAS ACTING WITHIN HIS DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY IN DOING SO.

3. I ALSO TOLD FAHMY THAT, AS I HAD TOLD HIM TWO EVENINGS AGO, AMBASSADOR TOON HAD SAME EVENING URGENTLY APPROACHED THE ISRAELIS TO DEMAND THAT THEY ALLOW THE MARINER TO CARRY ON ITS WORK AND TO OBJECT TO THE ULTIMATUM WHICH

WE UNDERSTOOD HAD BEEN GIVEN. HIGHEST LEVEL ISRAELI AUTHORITIES HAD TOLD TOON THAT NO ULTIMATUM WAS DELEVERED AND THAT THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO PROVOKE A CONFRONTATION. AS FAHMY WAS AWARE, ISRAELIS CLAIM THAT EGYPTIAN VESSELS SHOULD NOT CROSS WHAT THEY CALL A MEDIAN LINE IN THE GULF. ACCORDING ISRAELI AUTHORITIES, ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD DONE NO MORE THAN TELL MARINER FOREMAN THAT RIG WAS 1.3 MILES WEST OF THE LINE AND ASK HIM TO MOVE OUT. MOREOVER, ISRAELIS HAD SAID THAT RIG FOREMAN CLAIMED IT WOULD TAKE EIGHT OR NINE HOURS TO LIFT THE ANCHORS. CLEARLY, THE TWO VERSIONS THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED-ONE FROM AMOCO AND ONE FROM THE ISRAELIS- ARE TOTALLY CONTRADICTORY. I HAD ASKED ROSS CRAIG OF AMOCO TO GET ME A FULL DEBRIEFING BY THE RIG FOREMAN.

4. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, FAHMY SNORTED. THIS WAS SIMPLY ANOTHER ISRAELI FABRICATION. HE HAD FROM OUTSET BEEN SURE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT PROVOKE AN ACTUAL CONFRONTATION; HENCE, HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO HILAL AND AMOCO TO KEEP THE MARINER ON LOCATION AND NOT MOVE OUT THE CREW. AMOCO HAD DISREGARDED GOE'S SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS. GOE DOES NOT ACCEPT ISRAELI MEDIAN LINE CONCEPT. HE THEN RELATED A CONVERSATION BETWEEN NEA/EGY AND EGYPTIAN EMBOFF WAHBA IN WHICH WE ALLEGEDLY INDICATED, INTER ALIA, THAT DEPT TOLD AMOCO THAT IT IS WITHIN COMPANY'S LEGAL RIGHT TO DRILL FOR OIL IN THE RAMADHAN FIELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CONCESSION AND THAT USG AGREES WITH GOE POSITION ON THIS MATTER. ISRAELI AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN URGENTLY SUMMONED BY DEPT AND A STRONG DEMARCH HAD BEEN MADE TO HIM, INCLUDING REJECTION OF THE ISRAELI ULTIMATUM.

5. FAHMY CONTINUED THAT THE ISRAELI ACTION IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO GOE. GOE EXPECTS DEPT TO STAND BY EGYPT
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IN THIS MATTER. AN AMERICAN COMPANY WAS INVOLVED WHICH HOLDS AN EGYPTIAN CONCESSION AND WAS OPERATING WITHIN THAT CONCESSION. THE MARINER FOREMAN'S PRECIPITIOUS DEPARTURE, FAHMY RAILE, WAS A SERIOUS ERROR. IT PLAYED INTO ISRAELI HANDS, ESPECIALLY SINCE ISRAELIS ARE SEEKING TO SET PRECEDENTS. ISRAELIS HAVE SCORED A POINT ON THIS ISSUE AND THE AMERICANS (READ AMOCO) HAVE TACITLY ACQUIESCED. HE INTENDS TO GIVE HILAL INSTRUCTIONS TO SEND THE AMOCO RIG OUT AGIAN WITHOUT DELAY, WITH ESCORTING EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS TO REDRESS THE DAMAGE DONE TO GOE'S POSITION. IF AMOCO REFUSES TO COMPLY, GOE WILL HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS CONCESSION.

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INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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6. I TOLD FAHMY THAT AMOCO HAS EVERY INTENTION OF FULFILLING ITS CONCESSION OBLIGATIONS AND IS DOING SO. I REPEATED, HOWEVER, THAT FAHMY CANNOT EXPECT AMOCO TO ENDANGER AMERICAN LIVES. FAHMY RETORTED THAT ISRAELIS ARE BLUFFING AND WILL NOT ATTACK AMERICAN-FLAG RIG OR PEOPLE OPERATING LEGALLY IN EGYPTIAN CONCESSION AREA. I THEN TOLD FAHMY ABOUT MY PERTINENT TALK YESTERDAY WITH GAMASY IN WHICH THE LATTER HAD INDICATED HE MIGHT TRY AGAIN. HE HAD INSTRUCTED HILAL TO WORK FOR THE TIME BEING EAST OF A CONCEPTUAL MEDIAN LINE, BUT TO GO BACK TO 304.1 AFTER RAMADHAN (CAIRO 11780). GAMASY'S APPROACH MADE GOOD SENSE. FAHMY WOULD HAVE NONE OF IT. WAITING UNTIL AFTER RAMADHAN WILL SIMPLY HARDEN THE PRECEDENT AND PLAY INTO ISRAELI HANDS. THE RIG MUST AGAIIN PROCEED WITHOUT DELAY TO THE SITE.

7. IN MY PRESENCE, FAHMY THEN TELEPHONED HILAL TO GIVE HIM INSTRUCTIONS TO THAT EFFECT. THERE ENSUED A FIFTEEN MINUTE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE TWO WITH HILAL BECOMING INCREASINGLY AGITATED. HILAL ARGUED IT WAS DANGEROUS TO SEND THE RIG BACK AT ONE OR TO PRECIPITATE A SHOWDOWN. AMOCO AND SANTA FE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE WILLING TO TO SO. IN REPLY TO FAHMY'S COMMENT THAT, IF AMOCO REFUSES, ITS CONCESSION WILL BE REVIEWED, HILAL OBJECTED. THE TELECON ENDED INCONCLUSIVELY WITH FAHMY INDICATING HE WOULD TAKE IT UP WITH GAMASY TO PRESS MINWAR TO SEND NAVAL ESCORTS FOR THE RIG. THE RIG SHOULD MOVE BACK WITHOUT DELAY AND ANCHOR ON LOCATION.

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8. FAHMY THEN TURNED TO ME TO SAY THAT HE DID NOT WISH THE
USG TO STOP THE RIG FROM MOVING OUT. I TOLD HIM IT WAS NOT
A QUESTION OF STOPPING ANYONE. AS I HAD SAID EARLIER, WE
WERE NOT QUESTIONING AMOCO'S LEGAL RIGHT TO BE THERE UNDER
THE GOE CONCESSION. AS HE KNEW, THE WHILE ISSUE IS STILL
UNDER DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND OURSELVES. WE
SIMPLY OBJECT TO AMERICAN PROPERTY OR PERSONS BEING MADE
PAWNS IN THIS KIND OF AN OPERATION. IF THE FOREMAN OF A RIG
BELIEVES IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE SAFETY OF HIS AMERICAN
CREW TO ORDER EVACUATION, HE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO SO.
FAHMY DID NOT AGREE, BUT ARGUED THAT THE ANCHORED RIG COULD
REMAIN AND THE CREW DEPART. IF ISRAELIS SEIZE THE RIG,
USG AND AMERICAN PUBLIC WILL KNOW WHO IS THE AGGRESSOR.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH FAHMY ACCUSED HILAL OF BEING EMOTIONAL
ABOUT THE ISSUE, HE, TOO, WAS IN A HIGHLY AGITATED STATE
ABOUT IT. HE WELCOMES AMERICAN COMPANY BEING OUT FRONT ON
THIS ONE AND ALSO WISHES MAKE IT TEST CASE OF EXTENT OF
OUR SUPPORT. HE INTENDS TO GIVE THE PRESIDENT A FULL REPORT
AND TO URGE THAT AMOCO BE INSTRUCTED TO SEND THE RIG BACK
TO 304.1 WITHOUT DELAY. HE IS CONCERNED THAT FAILURE TO DO
SO STRENGTHENS THE ISRAELI POSITION AND WEAKENS GOE POSITION.
WHETHER SADAT AND GAMASY WILL ACQUIESCE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
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